

# RADIO MAINTENANCE

## Teamwork ensures mission success

**By Tech. Sgt. Jim Verchio**

401st Air Expeditionary Wing Public Affairs

**CAMP EAGLE BASE, Bosnia Herzegovina** — Keeping radio lines open is important for any military mission, and in Bosnia it requires a team effort between the 401st Air Expeditionary Wing and maintenance contractors on the front lines.

It takes a team effort because preventive maintenance inspections are due every 336 days, explains Tech. Sgt. J-Russ Smith, ATCALS maintenance certifier who is temporarily assigned to the 401st AEW at Aviano AB, Italy.

“I went into Bosnia to work with on site contractors who can do the work, but because of Air Force Instruction, can’t certify the work.”

Even though provisions are in place when inspections and maintenance cannot be accomplished due to unforeseen conditions, it’s always best to get them done on time.

“In theory, an airfield can be declared unusable when radio maintenance isn’t accomplished within the time parameters,” said Sergeant Smith, whose home unit is the 96th Communications Squadron at Eglin AFB, Fla. “Once a piece of equipment is removed from service for repair or adjustment, it must be certified within 15 days. Working side-by-side with contractors, we’re able to do the required inspections and maintenance, sign off the certifications and ensure the airfield at Camp Eagle Base continues to operate without degraded communications capability.”

He said working with the contractors has been a good experience. He said their knowledge of Air Force equipment is outstanding and that because communicators, now more than ever, are spread so thin across the globe, comm manning is always a topic of conversation. “It’s comforting to know these [contractors] are on site,” he said. Working from inside the control tower, Sergeant Smith knows that even though the mission in Bosnia isn’t headline news, it’s still an important one.

“I’ve been doing this job for a while, and it’s always a good feeling to make a difference...especially in this type of environment.”



Photos by Staff Sgt. Robert Worthington / 401st AEW

**Tech. Sgt. J-Russ Smith, an ATCALS maintenance certifier, performs required inspections on the GRT-22 UHF transmitter from inside the control tower here.**

downtown  
Sarajevo



# BOSNIA

# CLEAR SKIES

## Meteorological & navigational systems craftsmen help keep aircraft on course

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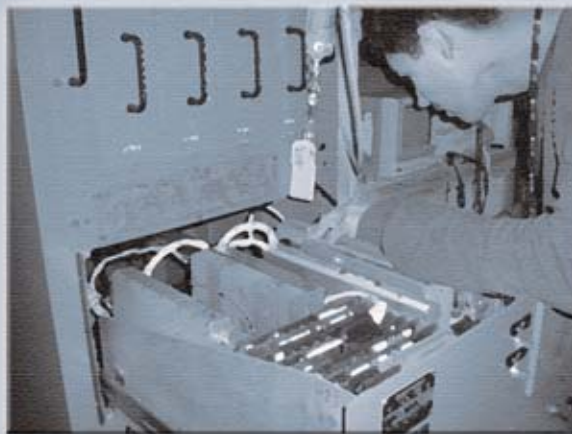
**TUZLA AIR BASE, Bosnia Herzegovina** — Navigating the skies presents challenges with wind, weather and high rates of speed all taxing a pilot's ability to maintain situational awareness.

Helping to alleviate some of the stressors faced by them are sophisticated navigational systems that guide an aircraft and its crew through inclement weather to the safety found at the end of the runway. And, maintaining those systems is the responsibility of meteorological and navigational systems craftsmen.

Recently those craftsmen fixed Tuzla's tactical air and navigation system, which was experiencing problems. A team of experts was quickly rounded up to get the job done in a manner that caused minimal degradation and downtime.

TACANs serve as an electronic roadmap for pilots. Small icons are displayed on radar scopes and heading indicators so pilots can navigate between TACAN stations. When operating overseas, it's critical these systems are operating at 100 percent efficiency or an aircrew can find itself in hostile airspace. By following the TACAN signal, pilots can navigate the airways as easily as driving a car down the highway.

"Tuzla's TACAN was operational, but it was in desperate need of realignment," said Staff Sgt. Robert Worthington, a METNAV craftsman who is deployed



**Ulysses Davis, a meteorological and navigational systems contractor, works on the ANFRN-45 TACAN at Tuzla International Airport in Bosnia Herzegovina.**

here from Laughlin AFB, Texas. Working together with contractors, Sergeant Worthington spent three days working and then certifying the alignment problems. "Without this alignment and certification, operations using the TACAN located at Tuzla could stop or be severely impaired," he said.

Tuzla's TACAN will be providing safe passage for aircrews in the Balkans for another year. Whether it's aligning a TACAN or repairing an Instrument Landing System, Sergeant Worthington points out the importance of these two navigational aids and how crucial they are to the men and women who trust them to guide Air Force aircraft.

"Imagine driving on a strange road in an unfamiliar city. Pilots face this dilemma every day. There's a certain satisfaction in knowing comm is providing the roadmap to their safety."

*Penji Mountains, the Bosnian Himalayas*

# HERZEGOVINA